

# Straight from the Vine

Winter 2006

The Environmental & Cultural Education Newsletter for the Virgin Islands Community

***Who has 150% more coastline than all of Los Angeles County?  
Read this month's "Straight from the Vine" to find out!***

## VINE: A QuEST Success

For a second year, VINE members collaborated for a presentation at the Quality Education Standards in Teaching (QuEST) workshop, held on both St. Croix and St. Thomas this past October. The hour-long presentation, "Teaching All, Reaching All Through VINE-Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators", highlighted various environmental and cultural programs being offered by VINE members on St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John. The VINE members shared their expertise and enthusiasm with teachers, describing the various free classroom presentations, fieldtrips and resources that are available through the VINE network.

VINE consists of environmental educators, teachers, organiza-

tions and persons promoting effective stewardship of the Virgin Islands, through environmental and cultural education.

Dr. William Coles, of DPNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife, moderated both this and last year's presentations. From the turnout and positive responses from teachers, he says that VINE is uniquely prepared to assist educators in encouraging their students to be proud of their islands' resources. "We can't always assume that the busy teacher will come to you. That's why VINE comes to them." Dr. Coles also says that "VINE is more than guest presenters and field trips. We have a wealth of materials that

teachers can use on their own. We want to encourage sound environmental education by promoting responsible resource use. VINE is helping move that forward, one teacher at a time."

For more information on the VINE network or to arrange a school visit for any environmental or cultural event by a VINE member, contact on St. Croix::

Dee Osinski  
VI Waste Management Authority  
778-7657

On St. Thomas contact:

Elizabeth Ban  
VI Marine Advisory Service  
693-1392

has had a tremendous response from teachers, students, and parents. The challenge now is to get participation more systemized and focused so that every child on St. Croix has an opportunity to explore their island in a new and exciting way. Its been tough at times, but always fun."

For more information or to schedule a visit, please contact:

Dan Odell  
St. Croix Environmental Assoc.  
773-1989

## SEA's Mobile Learning Lab Makes Big Splash

With six months under his belt driving his brightly-decorated van all around St. Croix, Dan Odell, Educational Coordinator for the St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA), has discovered that more and more people know that, when they see him pull up to their school or fair ground, they're in for a fun time of learning science and environmental stewardship with St. Croix's most well-traveled naturalist. After all, how many other people drive a science laboratory to work each day? Says Mr.

Odell, "I think the kids get a kick out of a van pulling up and then all these microscopes and butterfly nets and water testing kits come out. It gets them really excited for what they're about to do. I'm getting busier every day. And I have VINE to thank for that. SEA believes that VINE is a step in the right direction for protecting the environment. The more cooperation we can garner, the easier it will be for all of us. The mobile learning lab is a viable resource that

## VINE is

- ◇ Coral World
- ◇ Fort Frederik Museum
- ◇ Hovensa, LLC
- ◇ Island Resources Foundation
- ◇ The National Park Service Virgin Islands NP
- ◇ The Nature Conservancy
- ◇ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ◇ St. Croix Environmental Association
- ◇ St. Croix Landmarks Society
- ◇ University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service
- ◇ University of the Virgin Islands Globe Program
- ◇ US Fish & Wildlife
- ◇ VI Department of Agriculture
- ◇ VI Department of Planning & Natural Resources
- ◇ VI Environmental Resource Station
- ◇ VI EpSCOR
- ◇ VI Marine Advisory Service
- ◇ VI Resource Conservation & Development, Inc.
- ◇ VI Waste Management Authority

### Upcoming Events

- ◇ February 6-8: Ship tours of OSV Bold
- ◇ February 18-20: St. Croix AgriFest 2006.

## Introducing the Four R's To Students: Five Fun Classroom Activities

Did you know Reducing, Recycling, Reusing and Rethinking are referred to as the 4 R's?

Here are some easy ways to introduce students to the 4 R's. These fun ideas will help reduce the amount of waste being disposed of in our landfills. Introduce the concept of the 4 R's before your classroom activities such as library time, arts and crafts and gardening activities.

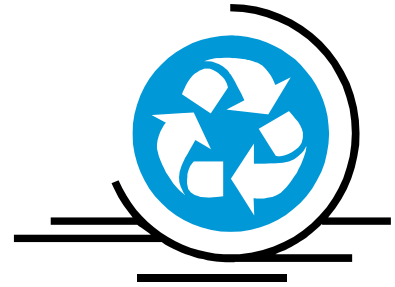
Students may be unaware, that many of their daily activities are already part of the solution to reduce waste. By having open discussions about waste reduction we are raising the student's awareness about waste management and the challenges we need to address as an island community.

Want a VINE member to jump start the lesson? VI Waste Management Authority's Dee Osinski is available for presentations about waste management in the Virgin Islands. For more information about her programs, please contact:

Ms. Dee Osinski  
Environmental Educator  
VI Waste Management Authority  
778-7657

### Five Simple Things That Can Make A Difference: Using the Four R's

- Before going to the library, talk about the importance of having libraries and thousands of books available for everyone. Open a discussion of how having a library is a good example of the how the 4R's work in reducing waste in the landfill.
- Rent a video or have students bring one in for a Friday afternoon special event. Discuss how renting or borrowing rather than buying video's helps to reduce waste.
- Have a trading day or a flea market for board, video games and CD's/DVD's. Use this activity as a way to discuss the importance of keeping these items out of the waste stream.
- Start a box garden and compost organic scrapes such as fruit and vegetable scraps, grass clippings, and small branches. Discuss the benefits of composting.
- Collect jars, milk cartons and other materials to use for arts and crafts and science fair projects. Discuss that reusing items that would otherwise be discarded and placed in the landfill gives the item a new and renewed purpose.



*Teaching students about how they can help keep their islands clean through recycling is a great classroom activity that helps build pride in community and home.*

### Share Your Stories With VINE!

Have a great story from a beach cleanup? Or maybe a poem about sea turtles? What about a great photo of one of our incomparable sunsets? Maybe you would like to publicize an upcoming event? If so, why not share it for all to read right here in *Straight from the Vine*? If so, please send it along to:

Liam Carr  
University of the Virgin Islands  
RR1 Box 10,000  
Kingshill, VI 00850-9781  
692-4144  
692-4047 (fax)  
lcarr@uvi.edu

Every effort to return original writings and artwork will be made.

## EPA Ocean Survey Vessel Set To Visit USVI

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Ocean Survey Vessel (OSV) Bold is scheduled to make its inaugural visit to the territory this coming February. While docked on St. Thomas on February 6th, U. S. EPA, in conjunction with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, will co-host media events, ceremony, VIP tour, and an open-ship event. This event begins at 8:00 am and concludes at 5:00 pm. Similarly, while docked on St. Croix on February 8th, a media event and an open ship event will also occur. Students will tour the ship be-

tween the hours of 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. The public is welcome to visit the ship following the student tours, from 3:00 pm. to 5:00 pm.

For more information on the OSV Bold's visit or to schedule a tour, please contact:

Ms. Kathleen M. Plaskett  
DPNR  
Division of Environmental Protection  
773-1082



*The U.S. EPA's OSV Bold is scheduled to visit the territory this February, providing students with tours of the ship, highlighting its work as a floating science and oceanographic lab.*

## Conservation Outreach Communities from USVI, BVI Join Forces

Representatives from Environmental and Conservation outreach programs in the USVI held a workshop with a group from the British Virgin Islands to share ideas, information and discuss their programs. The October 7 workshop has started an era of conservation outreach partnership between the two territories that will help build stronger programs for environmental education in the Virgin Islands.

The USVI outreach representatives are members of the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators (VINE) and include representatives from VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources, The University of the Virgin Islands, The Virgin Islands National Park, VI Waste Management Authority and The Nature Conser-

vancy. The group from the BVI included primary and secondary school teachers, and representatives from the BVI National Parks Trust and BVI Department of Conservation and Fisheries. The workshop also included a trip to Coral World.

The workshop was coordinated by Lee Pagni, Conservation Education Specialist at the San Diego Zoo and Elizabeth Ban, Marine Advisor at UVI's VI Marine Advisory Service and co-founder of VINE. Travel costs for BVI educators were funded through a grant from the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums received by the San Diego Zoo as part of a program to help improve capacity for conservation education with several of our collaborators in the Caribbean.



*Dr. Henry Smith of UVI, talks with members of various environmental and cultural groups at a joint USVI–BVI meeting held on the St. Thomas campus of the university.*

## WIMARCS, Others Encourage Budding Sea Turtle Biologists

The first Junior Sea Turtle Biologist Seminar was conducted the week of July 11<sup>th</sup> at The Nature Conservancy in Little Princess on the North side of St. Croix. The seminar series was designed to educate local grade and high school students (ages 12-16) about the biology of turtles, and threats to local sea turtle species. The seminar also encouraged participation in field research of sea turtle biology and consideration of the field of Marine Biology as a potential career.

The seminar was organized by Kemit Amon Lewis, a St. Croix native, who is currently pursuing his Masters degree at Savannah State University, in Savannah Georgia. Mr. Lewis recruited local sea turtle biologists to speak on a variety of topics. Speakers included Steve and Jeanne Garner of WIMARCS, Amy Mackay of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, William Coles of V.I. DPNR-Division of Fish and Wildlife, along with Mr. Lewis. Topics included: basic biology, local concerns and conservation efforts, global concerns and conservation efforts, community efforts, and local research and tagging programs. These topics were addressed for all three main nesting species of sea turtles on St. Croix, including the critically endangered leatherback, the endangered hawksbill, and threatened green sea turtles. At the conclusion of the week long seminar, participants were treated to a barbecue at the

Frederiksted pool, followed by a hands-on educational experience at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge. While on the refuge, the turtle experience culminated with students witnessing first-hand the hatching of a clutch of leatherback turtles. The first Junior Sea Turtle Biologist Seminar proved to be a great success in educating and encouraging budding biologists in the science of sea turtles.

Look for information on the 2006 sea turtle seminar in the near future. This seminar will be held close to the end of the school year.

For more information on the 2006 Sea Turtle Seminar, please contact:

Steve Garner  
WIMARCS  
772-1382

For information on other sea turtle programs available, please contact:

Dr. William Coles  
DPNR—Division of Fish & Wildlife  
773-1082



*A freshly emerged hatchling rests in the hands of a WIMARCS biologist during the past sea turtle hatching season on St. Croix..*

*Did you know that leatherback sea turtles, the world's largest turtle, swims up to 1250 miles each year just to reach to St. Croix's Sandy Point to lay their eggs each year? In June 2005, a female leatherback crawled up the beachhead of Sandy Point with research tags indicating she was last observed laying eggs in Panama!*

### Leatherbacks Make Return to St. Croix, See Turtles Nesting Up Close

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pleased to announce that they will, once again, offer school and youth groups the opportunity to visit Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) during the 2006 leatherback sea turtle nesting season.

Since 1981, the United States Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife (DPNR), has run a comprehensive study of the biology of the leatherback sea turtles nesting on the beaches of Sandy Point NWR. Education has been an important component of the study since its inception.

Sandy Point NWR, as an important nesting site for these endangered turtles, provides unique educational opportunities for the St. Croix community. Every nesting season, hundreds of local students and adults visit Sandy Point to witness both leatherback nesting and hatchling emergence. The program, started in 1997 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, plays an important role in the conservation of the leatherback sea turtle.

Throughout the history of the Leatherback Research Project, there has been a steady increase in the number of turtles nesting each season. The combination of nesting and hatchling turtles created an opportunity for a visitor program which would allow community members to see turtles, while ensuring the protection of this globally endangered species.

The Sandy Point Sea Turtle Education Program makes the community an integral part of the protection of sea turtles and their habitats. In doing so, it fosters a conservation ethic which extends to all aspects of the natural community. An educated and concerned public is our greatest ally when it comes to the preservation of sites such as Sandy Point. The visitor program shows visitors a world they may never have seen before. This is especially true of our local young people, since St. Croix has no zoos or natural history museums. For many of these children, this is their first opportunity to interact with a wild animal.

Since 1997, thousands of schoolchildren and local adults have visited Sandy Point to see leatherback sea turtles nesting. Beginning on 23 January, we will be accepting reservations from school and youth groups for trips in April, May, June, and July. Reservations are only accepted for groups of 15 to 30 people at a time. Steve Garner, of WIMARCS, says people need to call early to ensure a reservation. "It's a very, very popular activity on the island. And every year, we have to turn back classes just because we're already full and its only early February. Once you know you want to see the turtles, call us!"

For more information or to make reservations, please contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
690-9452

### DPNR-Coastal Zone Division Holds Student Oceans Conference

Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Coastal Zone Management Division held its Second Annual Coastal Zone Management Student Oceans Conference "Caribbean Coastal Threats and Protections, Our Oceans Here Today Gone Tomorrow" on December 6, 2005. Based on the feedback of conference attendees, the event was a tremendous success. The Conference provided a unique and exciting opportunity for two students and teachers from each senior high school and college campus in the territory to attend the conference and interact with and learn first hand from the professionals that they themselves might someday become.

The main focus of the conference was on Coastal Zone problems and the possible solutions, which included presenters from University of the Virgin Islands VIMAS, "Pollution Impacts on the Ocean Environment" DPNR-Energy office "New Energy Concepts Relating to the Ocean", DPNR-Coastal Zone Management "Legal Issues" and DPNR-Environmental Protection "The Clean Marina Program". The presentations encouraged the students to empower themselves with the tools to foster marine conservation with an emphasis on protection and preservation of the coastal resources in the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean.

Students participated in an afternoon breakout session with their peers to prepare group presentations on one of the topics presented in the morning. Their presentations were very interest-

ing to include a commercial to stop pollution. Additionally, the students were given the opportunity to meet peers who are interested in marine science and conservation. It is the hope that they will draw inspiration from what they have learned, as they become the new leaders of our marine environment and help manage our coastal resources for the future.

For more information on school activities and events sponsored by DPNR-CZM, please contact:

Ms. Lillian Moolenaar  
DPNR -CZM  
Division of Coastal Zone Management  
774-3320

*Did you know that the U.S. Virgin Islands have nearly 120 miles of coastline? Compared to Los*

*Angeles County, which has 81 miles of coastline in an area of 465 square miles, the USVI has 150% more coast from only 135 square miles of land. Its no wonder that the U.S. Virgin Islands are so intimately tied to their marine environment. From fisheries to major ports to world-class dive spots, the territory boasts something for everyone, provided they at least like the ocean!*

### Hawksbill Hatchlings Recuperate at Coral World

This season Coral World has had the privilege to care for numerous Hawksbill hatchlings. Hatchlings are brought in by concerned beachgoers who find them struggling on the beach or getting tossed around the surf zone. When the turtles are brought in, measurements are taken to allow biologists to monitor their health while in Coral World's care. The average weight of the hatchlings brought in is just under half an ounce, or the same weight as four chicken eggs. They are fed a diet of sponges, algae, clam and fish. Once the turtles appear healthy and are eating and diving well, they are taken by boat back into the ocean and released in a protective covering of sargassum or palm fronds. After all, every hatchling released

is hope for more Hawksbills in the future.

For more information on the sea turtle rehabilitation program and other programs offered by Coral World, please contact:

Thea Mension  
Aquarist  
Coral World Ocean Park  
775-1555

Or visit their website at:  
<http://www.coralworldvi.com>